

CAMBRIAN COAST RAILWAY LIAISON CONFERENCE

**Minutes of a meeting of the Cambrian Coast Railway Liaison Conference
held at Y Ganolfan, Porthmadog on Friday, 8 November 2019
from 11.15 a.m. until 2.00 p.m.**

Present:

Cllr. Selwyn Griffiths (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Louise Hughes (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr Anne Lloyd Jones (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Eirwyn Williams (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Eryl Jones-Williams (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Owain Williams (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Trevor Roberts (Shrewsbury/Aberystwyth Railway Liaison Committee)
Delwyn Evans (Meirionnydd Access Group)
PC Andy Greaves (British Transport Police)
Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury- Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association)
Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Assembly Member for Dwyfor/Meirionnydd)
Sioned Haf Roberts (Dwyfor/Meirionnydd AM Office)
Michael Williams (Powys Council)
Rhian Williams (Integrated Transport and Road Safety Manager, Gwynedd Council)
Mrs Mererid Watt (Translator, Gwynedd Council)
Siôn Owen (Member Support Officer, Gwynedd Council)

Sam Hadley (Network Rail)
Lowri Joyce (Transport for Wales)

Apologies:

Liz Saville Roberts (MP Dwyfor Meirionnydd),
Mrs Claire Williams (Cambrian Railways Partnership Officer),
Cllr. Annwen Hughes, (Gwynedd Council)
Cllr. Freya Benthall, (Gwynedd Council)
Trefor Jones, (Dwyfor Representative Unllais Cymru),
Ann Elias (GMW)
Mr Stuart Williams, (Talyllyn Railway)
Chris Wilson

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams was elected Chair for 2019-20.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Delwyn Evans was elected Vice-chair for 2019/20.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

4. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair had not received any urgent items.

3. MINUTES

Submitted: Minutes of the conference meeting held on 30 November 2018.

Resolved: To accept and approve the minutes.

4. REPORT BY NETWORK RAIL

Mr Sam Hadley, Wales Route Public Affairs Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and he reported on the following matters:

- Performance on the railways had not been good enough over the summer, and an intermittent problem had been discovered with the signals system, however, this had now been resolved.
- He suggested the possibility of having a visit for a small group to see the signals centre at Machynlleth, or to organise a presentation for a future Conference meeting.
- The rough weather had been a problem, and difficulties in other areas had an impact on the Cambrian Coast Railway services. He recognised the frustration of railway users, and noted that Network Rail was monitoring problematic areas carefully, and was working on long-term solutions.
- Performance monitoring arrangements were now monitoring in greater detail and focused on arrival times at individual stations rather than the start and end of the journey.
- This change had led to minor changes locally in order to improve efficiency.
- That a new business model had been developed, which gave more flexibility to target expenditure in the areas required.
- That the improvements made following October 2018 had borne fruit, leading to less damage to wheels and keeping more vehicles in operation. In turn this meant that vehicles would not be taken from the Cambrian Railway and diverted to alleviate a shortage in other areas.
- The Williams Review was likely to report following the election, with a presumption of significant changes to the railways.
- **Friog Wall** - An officer from Network Rail had been to a community meeting, that plans had been developed jointly with the Council to undertake the work. No date had been set thus far.
- **Talwrn Bach level crossing** - Work had been planned for year 3 of the existing funding period, namely 2021-22. There was also be a need to cooperate with local landowners.
- **Afon Artro bridge** - Photographs of the work were shown, that had caused the line to close temporarily. He noted that there were a high number of wooden bridges on the Cambrian Coast Railway and that Network Rail used the maintenance work to develop techniques to be used on Barmouth Bridge.
- He apologised that information had been sent out recently in English only to stakeholders, and expressed amazement that this had happened in such a Welsh speaking area.

Questions and observations arising from the discussion:

- Regarding Arto Bridge, would it not have been beneficial to undertake work on Tŷ Gwyn and Llandanwg bridges at the same time?

In response, Sam Hadley noted that it was a sensible suggestion and he assumed that there was a sensible reason for undertaking work only on this bridge. Network Rail had seen when undertaking work on the Conwy Valley line that it was cost effective to undertake as many pieces of maintenance work as possible at the same time on the section of line.

- What type of service would be undertaken on a Sunday in the future?
- Would free travel with a pass continue?
- Would the Cambrian Railway continue to lose carriages to other parts of Wales?

In response, Sam Hadley noted that the Sunday rail service would change from 3 to 5 trains a day, with a further increase in the future. Travelling with a pass would continue to be seasonal only because of the lack of capacity on the trains to maintain this throughout the year. He added that the occasions whereby carriages would be lost to other areas would reduce as vehicles were upgraded in other areas, and vehicles that suit the Cambrian Railway well would remain on it.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

5. REPORT BY TRANSPORT FOR WALES

The Chair welcomed Lowri Joyce, Transport for Wales, to introduce herself and report on Transport for Wales' activity to date. She reported on the following matters:

- She had been appointed by Transport for Wales in April 2019, after years of working in the Nuclear industry.
- A route had been re-opened to enable trains to travel from Wrexham to Liverpool direct.
- Transport for Wales was looking to increase capacity, including the return of trains pulled by a locomotive
- That the 'delay repay' scheme had commenced and refunded tickets if a train was late by 15 minutes or more.
- It was intended to work closely with communities to improve community cooperation and encourage residents to help.
- Performance was now being measured differently, and in greater detail.
- There were now 120 new jobs, with a strong representation from the north that would advocate to improve provision.
- They had learnt from the experience of users with the change in the free travel passes. No passenger would be turned away once the new passes were operational therefore pass holders did not have to worry.

- Good work had been undertaken in partnership with the Council by attending libraries to assist residents with applications for a new card.
- A scheme to the value of £195 million had been launched to give customers a better experience, including installation of CCTV, wi-fi, shelters and cycle stores in every station.
- The scheme would commence in the stations of Machynlleth and Dyfi Junction on the Cambrian Railway, with Machynlleth station also being a pilot dementia friendly station.
- That it was proposed to look at dormant buildings to encourage their use.

Questions and observations arising from the discussion:

- When trains are replaced by buses, a bus that is too small is provided and this means that passengers are left behind, especially those with bicycles and wheelchairs.
- That providing plenty of room for bicycles was important as there was an obvious demand on the Cambrian Coast Railway. It was hoped that the necessary space would be provided in the new vehicles that would be provided.

In response, Lowri Joyce noted that Transport for Wales was aware on the problems with buses, and an effort would be made to mitigate the problems in the future.

- It was noted that there was not enough time sometimes to transfer from the train to a bus to continue the journey, in addition to gaps in provision in other places.

In response, Lowri Joyce noted that an effort was being made to integrate transport services better, and stakeholders were welcome to contact her with any problems.

- Whilst the cleaning of stations was welcomed, why had an overseas company been contracted to undertake the work?

In response, it was noted that it was a Welsh company who had won the contract, but there was no information about any sub-contracts or staffing to hand.

The members expressed their thanks for the report.

5. BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE REPORT

The Chair welcomed PC Andy Greaves of British Transport Police.

He noted that the Cambrian Railway was one of the safest routes on the Transport for Wales system. The only times when problems arose was when trains were cancelled at short notice, but he was aware that there were efforts being made to resolve any problems.

6. FORMAL QUESTIONS

Formal written questions had been submitted by various Community Councils, and the following responses were received:

1	Porthmadog Town Council - for Transport for Wales
1.1	What developments are in the pipeline for the trains to ensure a bilingual service?
	It was noted that efforts were being made to ensure that staff could pronounce Welsh place-names correctly, including offering Welsh lessons.
1.2	Why are so many trains delayed so often, and running late?
	This matter had already been discussed at the meeting.
1.3	When will they provide additional provision on the trains to be able to carry more bicycles?
	This matter had already been discussed at the meeting.
1.4	What are their arrangements with regard to litter picking along the line, noting problems near Cambrian Terrace in Porthmadog? (It was noted that the litter could go into the 'Cyt' and create environmental problems)
	It was noted that litter accrual was a problem and holistic inter-agency collaboration was required to resolve the problem. It was also necessary to prevent passengers from dropping litter, as well as stopping fly-tipping. Efforts would be made in the future to reduce waste produced by passengers, and a scheme of adopting stations would be offered in due course.
1.5	Are there any plans to offer a speedy service between Pwllheli and Shrewsbury in the mornings and evenings, so that the journey could be completed in two hours, rather than three?
	It was noted that this idea had been offered in the past, but had faced opposition from the users of the smaller stations on the line.
1.6	Is it possible to have a food and drink provision from Pwllheli to Machynlleth?
	It was noted that there were efforts to ensure provision in the larger stations and further improvements would be offered in the new year.
1.7	Why are people who have concessionary travel passes not permitted to use them on the Cambrian Railway throughout the year, in the same way that train users can between Blaenau Ffestiniog and Llandudno?
	It was noted that it was not possible to offer the same entitlement as trains on the Cambrian Railway were too full in the summer.
2	Cricieth Town Council - for Transport for Wales
2.1	Could we please have an update on the train operator's plans for the Cricieth station?
	It was noted that the station would receive the same attention as the other stations in accordance with the Transport for Wales upgrading schemes.

2.2	(for Network Rail) There is concern about the condition of some footpaths around Cricieth station: The need to improve the maintenance of the following paths: the narrow path from the car park to the station, and also the first 20 yards from path number 1 towards the direction of Ysgol Treferythyr.
	It was noted that there was no certainty regarding landownership on the Cricieth station car park, but Network Rail had undertaken work there in the past. Network Rail would look at the paths and would assess what work was required.
3	Councillor Owain Williams - for Transport for Wales
3.1	While I welcome the improvements to the Welsh-medium communications service - is it possible to improve the pronunciation of place-names and stations in our language? Using fluent Welsh-speakers would be a start - after all, if the same mistakes were made in English...what would the answer be?
	It was noted that efforts were being made to ensure the correct pronunciation of place-names. Research had also been made to use technology similar to 'Alexa' to try and create a flexible pre-recorded system.
4	Mr Roger Goodhew (Shrewsbury- Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association) - for Transport for Wales
	Does the train operator have any incentive to develop a through train service to the centres of government in Cardiff and London?
	It was noted that currently there was no incentive. However, Transport for Wales was open to offer developments based on demand. It was added that some demand had been recorded for better connections to Manchester. The service had improved in recent years and it would continue to improve and develop. However, this would have to be built gradually and it was likely that Transport for Wales would work on better connections between Cardiff and the rest of Wales.

Resolved: To extend thanks for the questions and the positive responses from the officers.

**CHAIRMAN
CHAIR**